

FAQs on Social Inc. Groups

What is a Social Inc. Group & why is it important?

- A Social Inc. Group is a group of students meeting up regularly at lunch (usually weekly or fortnightly) to hang out together and have fun.
- At schools where there is a support unit, students may only have limited socialisation experience with other students outside of their unit. Many students in the 'mainstream' school may struggle at lunch - 10% of an average school's population will identify as having a disability & many more are 'unsure.'
- Opportunity for students of different years, abilities and genders to get to know each other.
- Start the conversation. End the awkward!
- Challenge stereotypes! Focus on abilities.

How do I start a Social Inc. Group?

- Decide on a day and time when you are able to meet regularly.
- Announce your Social Inc. group and day you meet/time at Assembly, year meetings, newsletters, posters and
- Email all teachers to recommend and send students to your Social Inc. Group who would benefit from this group or who could contribute

Who is participating?

- Ideally the group should be 50% mainstream students and 50% support students.
- If you have students from support or mainstream doing an amazing job leading the group and coming up with activities, you should consider that this could be recognised by the Duke of Edinburgh award. <http://www.dukeofed.com.au/>
- An enthusiastic staff member and/or volunteer would be ideal to support and facilitate the activities at first as they might have fresh ideas and also initially students might need some support and coaching.

- Consider inviting a former student with a disability to volunteer helping out with the group – great work experience for them, great role modelling for students of all abilities.

How to plan activities or events for the Social Inc Group.

- Student engagement in the process of planning activities is essential.
- You might want to do it at the beginning of each term. May be at your first get together you might want to ask your students what they would like to do on a week by week basis. You can write this on a white board and then take a photo of it and save it. This way you have an idea what you are going to do on a week by week basis.
- Or you could have one major event each term, that involves the whole school community and each meeting could evolve around that event.
- If you are super organised you may like to plan ahead for the year in February.

Why might I want to use a volunteer?

- Volunteers could possibly run the groups, if your school doesn't have a teacher available or if you have a big group it's great to have someone else who can help.
- Volunteers can help you to plan for the term/year and keep you on track through the year.
- Organise activities, help and support the students with an event.
- Bring skills that students can learn from and engage with (e.g. artist/origami/sporty)
- Promote active participation - supporting (physically) people with disabilities to participate in an activity. (eg. hand over hand stirring a cake mix for someone that needs assistance to move their hands.)
- Positive role modelling for students of all abilities seeing volunteers who have disabilities engaging with the group to support group activities.
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- Solicit donations or contributions from local businesses to support events or activities that you want to plan.

Sounds great....how do I find a volunteer?

- Advertise in your school community newsletter, your FB website, Instagram or Alumni emails. (An advert template is in the Social Inc. Kit.)
- Actively promote the opportunity to students who are leaving the school in Year 12.

What paperwork do I need for volunteers?

Volunteers should complete a Working With Children's Check and a police check.

<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/working-with-children/working-with-children-check/apply>

<http://fit2work.com.au/?gclid=CNC3mZi478wCFcWUvQod9H4O1Q>

How to communicate with your volunteer on how to run the Social Inc Groups?

Give your volunteer clear instructions on how you want to run the groups. Do you want the volunteer to plan and run with it or would you like the volunteer to be a helper? Give clear instructions.

How can I attract mainstream students to attend Social Inc Groups?

Have Social Inc. Group posters around the school, this could be a great project to get the students to design at a meeting, or use the templates in the Social Inc. kit.

Present at assembly, teachers meetings and Year 7 and 8 meetings.

Ask teachers, which students would benefit from attending, get them to send you names. Use your schools social media or newsletter to put photos about the activities and events you do at your Social Inc. meetings to build a profile.

Have a notice board at school in a prominent place featuring school leaders of Social Inc. and what is coming up activity-wise.

What activities or events can we do at our Social Inc. meetings?

- There are many ways to run your Social Inc. meetings, ideally it should all be led by student ideas and what they would feel are inclusive activities and games.
- Make it fun!
- Many schools run it like an open group, where everyone is welcome to come along and feel safe to hang out. You could have a corner with board games, play station, art corner and a group that do different games each week, ie competitive games or sports games etc.
- Another option, is that you could plan for an inclusive excursion or event each term and just work as a group to organise this. The meetings should promote getting to know each other, common interests and making friends.
- Food is always a winner and....did we say, make it fun!?

How often should the Social Inc. groups meet?

Ideally, once a week or fortnight, but if that is not possible you can meet whenever it suits everyone.

How do I communicate with people who have different abilities?

Always focus on people first > disability second = person centred. People with a disability are individuals, and the experience each person has of their diagnosis and disability is also unique to them. Don't assume what things a person can and can't do. Always ask the person first if they need help.

Ability Focus – A person may have just one disability, but many abilities.

What will it cost our school to run Social Inc.?

Time is money. At the beginning you will need to allocate a teacher some time to set up the survey(s), look at responses and plan the roll out appropriate for your school. Every school is different...one school may like to show the awareness modules as part of PDHPE, another may slot them in elsewhere.

Once you have a Social Inc. group, you will need a teacher (we recommend two) to drive the engagement with students. If your school has a support unit it is recommended that you have a mainstream teacher paired with a support unit teacher. This also means that you can alternate attendance at the group meetings and if 'the person with the recipe' leaves the school you have some continuation.

Who can I email or call for some ideas and brainstorming?

- Look on [socialinc.org.au/Information for Schools](http://socialinc.org.au/Information%20for%20Schools) for some details of teachers who have been involved in Social Inc. since 2013 and are happy to discuss their experience.
- Visit the [SocialInc.2013](#) page on Facebook to get ideas from schools that have posted information.